



Minutes from the regular meeting of the
Asheville Downtown Commission
May 8, 2009 at 8:30 am
Office of Economic Development
29 Haywood Street in downtown Asheville

Members Present: Peter Alberice, Pam Myers, Harry Weiss, John Rogers, Jesse Plaster, Kitty Love, Jan Davis, Brad Galbraith, Guadalupe Chavarria
Members Absent: Dwight Butner, Byron Greiner

Minutes

A motion was made by Davis to approve the minutes of the April meeting as presented.
Seconded by Galbraith; passed unanimously.

Parking Rates

Presentation of information by Cathy Ball, Director of Transportation and Engineering
Ball gave a history of parking rates in downtown including present day fees for garages and meters. She explained how the current parking equipment/mechanicals used at City decks has played a role in rate setting, especially the practice of charging a flat \$1/2 rate to exit the garage from 7 pm until 10 am. Staff is aware that there is a perception of this being an incentive, especially for area employees, to stay downtown until 7 pm in order to save approximately \$6/7 by avoiding the per hour rates charged from 10 am until 7 pm. The City has installed new equipment for all the garages, and now proposes to base fee structure on standard hourly rates (with a daily max of \$8) at all times of the day. Ball solicited the following input from Commission members:

- City needs to publicize the ability for area business owners to purchase parking vouchers for clients.
- Concern that customers for area businesses will be opposed to the change.
- New system is better, easier to use because it takes dollar bills more readily and accepts debit cards.
- The biggest impact would be on the small business employees who have low incomes; look for alternatives or lesser rates so businesses can keep their (night time, especially) employees out of the on street spaces intended for customer rotation.

John Rogers made a motion to ask City Council to consider the issues raised by the Commission and have those issues reflected in the Downtown Commission minutes; Guadalupe Chavarria seconded; all remaining voted in favor.

Downtown Master Plan

The first presentation to City Council will occur next Tuesday. Staff report for this item will be available to the public on the City's website by the end of today. The purpose of this presentation is for the Council to hear from the Goody Clancy team and have the opportunity to ask questions of Goody Clancy. The team's presentation will include about thirteen slides. The next step in the approval process is the public hearing at City Council on May 28th. Staff agreed to dedicate a good portion of time at the Commission's upcoming Annual Retreat in order to discuss any prepared presentation of statements to Council for this item.

Downtown Design Review Continuation from regular April meeting of Formal Review for new construction at 90 Patton Avenue

Western North Carolina Rescue Ministries

Jessica Bernstein presented staff report, which is available at the 5th floor Planning Services department of the City Hall, noting that the continuation occurred due to changes in plan

submittal. While the current design is not dissimilar from the original, there is an additional street wall concept that has been included and a designed using comment from the previous month's meeting.

Requests for modifications include parking placement and building frontage along a key pedestrian street.

Bernstein noted that while the project does not meet all of the design review guidelines the overall design is acceptable to staff.

Chad Roberson presented elevations and site plans in a slide show. He detailed the new streetwall design which is connected to a newly designed courtyard space. Commission comment at the last meeting including increasing the amount of hardscaping, which the design team accomplished.

Commission commented that the eastern façade of the building is inactive and does not meet intent of design guidelines. While it is true that someday this elevation may be obscured by adjacent development, Commission feels something could be done to ameliorate in the meantime. Commission queried applicant as to how the WNCRM has planned for future infill development of this specific parcel, for example the placement of utilities. Commission feels attention to this kind of planning will help them make a decision on approving modifications. Commission commented that front entrance, based on programming, could use more pedestrian activity in order to enhance the streetscape as a whole.

Plaster made a motion to approve design with condition that applicant return for Commission review/approval of building materials before final plans approved

Downtown Design Review –Interpretation Review for Screening of Mechanicals provision in Unified Development Ordinance

Jessica Bernstein presented for the Planning Department.

From the staff report:

"The Hotel Indigo was approved by the Commission on July 13, 2007, and is currently under construction (13-story hotel with 100 hotel rooms and 12 residential condominium units located on Haywood Street between Montford Avenue and the 1-240 exit ramp, at the former site of the Chamber of Commerce). At the time of DTC review, there were no chimney features shown on the renderings. After more detailed plan development, it became necessary to the function of the gas fireplaces in the residential units below to install two chimneys with chimney vents on the northeast end of the roof. They are each 4' in height and 5'10" in length. The design and operational standards in Section 7-8-18 of the UDO state that *"mechanical equipment and appurtenances necessary for the function of the building shall be enclosed and screened or otherwise designed to be integral with the overall building function, included but not limited to elevators, stairs, cooling towers and vent stacks."*

For your (Commission) interpretation:

The applicant has designed the chimney base to be constructed from EIFS and can be painted to match the color and material on the face of the building. The vents may be able to be painted as well. Is the painting of the chimneys and vents an acceptable method of screening or do these entire elements need to be enclosed? The applicant contends that the chimneys and vents will not be visible from most pedestrian perspectives, except when viewed from a distance and that constructing a solid enclosure around the vents would have a greater negative visual impact.

Recommendation: Staff believes that painting the chimneys and vents a similar color to the exterior of the building is acceptable rather than constructing an enclosure, but since the chimneys were not featured on the original design approved by the Commission and since there is some ambiguity in the UDO language as to what constitutes sufficient screening, this request is coming back to the Commission for review." After discussion and applicant questioning, John Rogers moved to approve the staff recommendation for interpretation, Peter Alberice seconded and all present voted in favor.

No Public Comment was made at the meeting.

Meeting Adjournment at 10.00 am.